

Ref.: TC/699

5 April 2024

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Application: 24/00423/F & 24/00424/LA

Site: 10 St Augustines Parade Bristol BS1 4UZ

Proposal: Removal of temporary air handling equipment, replacement of obsolete permanent air handling equipment with access gantry and repositioning of access stair over roof. Reinstatement of historic, opening roof and ventilation grilles. Recovering roof to prevent water ingress.

Remit:

Theatres Trust is the national advisory public body for theatres. We were established through the Theatres Trust Act 1976 'to promote the better protection of theatres' and provide statutory planning advice on theatre buildings and theatre use in England through The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, requiring the Trust to be consulted by local authorities on planning applications which include 'development involving any land on which there is a theatre'.

Theatres Trust

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

Telephone 020 7836 8591 **Email** info@theatrestrust.org.uk **Website** theatrestrust.org.uk **Twitter** @TheatresTrust

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Chair Dave Moutrey OBE

Director Jon Morgan

Trustees James Dacre, Suba Das, Stephanie Hall, Annie Hampson, Lucy Osborne, Truda Spruyt, Katie Town

Comment:

These applications for planning permission and listed building consent have come to the attention of Theatres Trust. They are seeking to remove and replace air handling equipment and associated infrastructure at the Bristol Hippodrome along with reinstatement of the opening to the building's roof dome, replacement of damaged roof covering and installation of an access walkway for future maintenance and repairs.

The Hippodrome is a Grade II listed heritage asset, designed by renowned theatre architect Frank Matcham for Sir Oswald Stoll. Stoll, who owned a number of venues and a film production company during the silent era and is noted for founding the Royal Variety Performance, considered the Hippodrome to be second to his flagship venue the London Coliseum (also designed by Matcham). The Hippodrome has a capacity of 1,951 seats and was built with a large water tank at the front of the stage, however this was lost in works to convert the Hippodrome to a cinema in the 1930s. Following a fire in 1948 which destroyed the Hippodrome's stage its flytower was rebuilt and the theatre reopened within a year; the auditorium had survived with little damage. Internally the theatre shares some design features with the Coliseum. Its ceiling is in the form of a large saucer dome which is capable of being slid open for ventilation. The auditorium is Baroque in style and is more sparsely decorated than Matcham's earlier works. Externally the Hippodrome has been altered over the years including losing a tower during the 1950s. Its canopy and entrance doors are more modern installations. The Hippodrome is an important cultural venue for Bristol, attracting touring West End shows and notable comedians, musicians and similar events. Paragraph 97 of the NPPF (2023) seeks planning decisions to plan positively for facilities of this nature.

The rationale for this project has been clearly articulated by the applicant, namely that the theatre's existing air handling units have come to the end of their operational life and the output of current temporary plant is insufficient. There is a pressing need for replacement to ensure that ventilation and comfort within the auditorium and other areas of the theatre meet the standards required.

Although the replacement equipment is of larger footprint and adds some additional height, we do not consider this will impact on the Hippodrome's significance. With reference to paragraph 208 of the NPPF, this scheme would additionally generate public benefits in terms of environmental sustainability and amenity as the new equipment will be more efficient and produce less noise than existing equipment.

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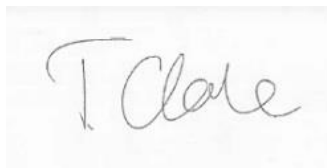
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Furthermore as part of these works there will be installation of replacement roof covering which will prevent water ingress and assist in the longer-term conservation of this important asset. The potential to regularly utilise the sliding roof as intended constitutes a heritage benefit.

We are therefore supportive of the granting of planning permission and listed building consent.

Please contact us if we may be of further assistance or should you wish to discuss this representation in greater detail.



Tom Clarke MRTPI
National Planning Adviser

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The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres. The Theatres Trust Charitable Fund co-operates with the Theatres Trust, has the same Trustees and is registered as a charity under number 274697